



Cal EMA
CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2010

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State Officials Urge Californians to Prepare for Summer Weather

SACRAMENTO – California will experience a warming trend this week, indicative of the hot summer months ahead. It is for this reason state officials today urged Californians to take steps now to prepare for any prolonged heat waves that occur this year.

“Even though Californians have experienced warm days leading up to the summer season, it’s important to remember to begin preparing for the possibility of excessive heat this season,” said Secretary Matthew Bettenhausen of the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA). “Every Californian can reduce their risk of heat-related death or illness later this summer by taking time now to review and update their emergency plans, learn first aid and CPR, restock their emergency supply kits, particularly their drinking water supplies, and creating a cooler environment.”

The interior northern California Valley will experience some of the warmest weather so far this summer season, with an anticipated high of 108 degrees through the weekend, with adequate overnight cooling. Cooler temperatures are expected to return throughout the region on Monday.

“Prolonged exposure to extremely high temperatures can be very dangerous, especially for seniors and other vulnerable populations,” said State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton.

The remarks from Bettenhausen and Horton come as Cal EMA, DHS and other state agencies prepare to implement the “seasonal readiness” phase of the state’s Contingency Plan for Excessive Heat Emergencies. The plan, which was developed by a multi-disciplinary task force at the direction of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger after the July 2006 heat wave caused more than 130 deaths, outlines state operations during excessive heat emergencies and provides planning guidance for local governments, nonprofit organizations and the private sector.

Because drinking fluids is essential to avoiding heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses, Bettenhausen and Horton strongly suggested that Californians include plenty of drinking water in their emergency supply kits.

They also recommended that Californians maintain their supply of portable radios and flashlights and make sure they have extra batteries.

“Past heat waves placed a significant strain on the state’s power grid,” noted Bettenhausen. “A working radio and flashlight will provide access to emergency information and instructions, as well as light if power is disrupted due to an overload of the power grid.”

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As part of their emergency planning efforts, Bettenhausen and Horton recommended that Californians consider the special needs of family members and neighbors who are elderly, have physical impairments and other special needs.

“Infants, small children, seniors, people with illnesses and those who are taking certain medications could be at additional risk to heat-related illnesses,” noted Horton. “Now, not when the temperatures start to rise, is the time to obtain extra medications and special foods, to teach relatives or neighbors to operate life-safety equipment and to arrange for someone to check on those who are living alone or have special needs.”

Individuals who work outdoors are reminded to drink plenty of water, wear light colored, loose-fitting clothing, wide brimmed hats and sunscreen. Utilizing a “buddy system” to check on your co-workers is also encouraged as a form of safety monitoring.

Other simple and cost-effective steps that Bettenhausen and Horton recommend Californians take to keep cool reduce their risk of heat-related illness during periods of extremely high temperatures include:

- ☐ Snugly installing window air conditioners
- ☐ Making sure that window air conditioners and air conditioning ducts are properly insulated
- ☐ Placing window reflectors made of cardboard covered with aluminum foil between windows and drapes to reflect heat back outside
- ☐ Weather stripping doors and sills
- ☐ Covering windows with drapes, shades, awnings or louvers to block out the sun

Additional tips on preparing for heat-related emergencies are available on the California Department of Health Services (DHS) and Cal EMA web sites at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov> and <http://www.calema.ca.gov>, respectively.

In addition to their efforts to public increase awareness of risk of prolonged exposure to heat, state-agency actions during the “seasonal readiness” phase include:

- Internal procedure and resource reviews by and coordination among key state to identify potential issues and problems;
- Contact by Cal EMA with county emergency officials to determine the status of local preparedness activities;
- The monitoring of heat-related unusual occurrences at long-term care facilities by the California Department of Public Health;
- The distribution of heat-related preparedness tips by the California Department of Social Services to its licensed facilities to ensure they are prepared to meet the needs of their clients if a heat wave occurs;
- The dissemination of notifications to schools regarding the need to review procedures and practices in response to excessive heat emergencies; and
- Checks by state Department of Mental Health Licensing reviewers of facility disaster and emergency preparedness plans for all mental health rehabilitation centers and psychiatric health facilities to ensure they are up-to-date.

For more information of the Contingency Plan for Excessive Heat Emergencies, please visit Cal EMA at www.calema.ca.gov. Additional health tips can be found on the Department of Health Services website located at www.dhs.ca.gov.

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